

EDITORIAL

Finding true comfort in freedom of speech

At issue:

Urbana Public Television should not be censored, despite some very offensive content.

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Sometimes it's pretty easy to forget what freedoms we enjoy. With a few pretty specific exceptions, Americans can generally say what they want in whatever way they are able to without the government interfering.

This comforts many, especially those in journalism. But in many cases, the freedom of speech causes discomfort. And in a way, that's what it was designed for. Popular and informed or not, an opinion is still an opinion. And in the case of Urbana Public Television, the First Amendment will keep programming that has been criticized as anti-Semitic on the air.

But what it doesn't do is force

anyone to keep watching.

The Urbana City Council has been grappling recently with protests from members of the Jewish community who vehemently dislike programming submitted by 88-year-old Timothy A. Brumleve. As an Urbana resident, he has the right to participate in public access television, just like others.

However, some people want the City Council to take measures to prevent this content from making it on the air. Even though it would probably make many feel better, it isn't the right thing to do.

While much of what Brumleve submitted is offensive, Urbana can't treat it any differently

than any other programming. For one thing, doing so would invite a lawsuit which would probably prevail according to acting City Attorney Ronald O'Neal in The News-Gazette on Tuesday. Moreover, the government shouldn't take it upon itself to decide what opinions are offensive.

It's not a perfect analogy, but Brumleve could submit a tape of himself repeatedly saying two plus two equals five over and over again. The First Amendment would protect it, even though it would probably seem quite absurd to people of all levels of education.

But more importantly, anyone who knows better can exercise their right to watch some-

thing else. And if accounts from those unhappy with the programs are to be believed, it shouldn't be hard to come to the same conclusion in this case.

A better remedy would be for the community to submit more programming to the station. It would raise the quality of the station and make the lower quality of anti-Semitic shows stand out.

In the long run, the satisfaction of providing more programming will outweigh the immediate gratification of censorship, however it is rationalized.

The bottom line is that UPTV is a community station with a community problem. It should be up to the community to repudiate it, not the government of Urbana.

Jeremiah Wrong

Jeremiah Wright has been overpopulating the news media, as of late. His controversial remarks and racially charged sermons have been so publicly scrutinized that many of us are ready to turn off the TV and scream, "I don't care anymore!" So, when I tell you that you should listen to my opinion about one of his recent speeches, I fully accept that you might want to stone me.

This past Sunday evening, Rev. Wright gave a speech at the NAACP's Freedom Fund dinner. His message seemed to be that "different" is not the same thing as "deficient" and that we are on the cusp of transforming society for the better. What I inferred from these two messages together was that social progress will arise out of accepting differences without judging them. What became clear to me, however, is that he has a warped a very dangerous understanding of what constitutes "difference."

The Reverend summarized a few lines of academic research, one of which is Dr. Janice Hale's book on the pedagogical incompatibility of African American children and a European-style educational system: "European and European American children have a left-brained cognitive, object-oriented learning style. And the entire educational learning system in the United States of America, back in the early '70s, when Dr. Hale did her research was based on left-brained cognitive object-oriented learning style." He proceeded to explain the difference between being left-brained and right-brained and generalized that African American children are right-brained, and European American children are left-brained.

To be perfectly forthright: This is wrong. It is unclear whether Wright has misunderstood the work he is citing or is just simplifying it for popular consumption. However, the scientific theory of individuals having different brain preferences (left versus right) that determine their cognitive abilities has been unanimously discredited. Although cultural differences do play an important role in many theories of racial disparity, there is no neurological distinction between African Americans and European Americans.

What disturbs me so much about Wright's appeal to pseudo-science in his speech is that it seems so credible. Although he was not preaching in a church, he was certainly delivering this message from the pulpit. So, not only does his theory of difference bolster itself on the credibility of other individuals' rigorous academic work, it takes on religious significance. Hence, when these claims are absorbed



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by members of the black church they are not just a scientific hypothesis but the truth of the matter.

The picture becomes even bleaker when we consider the context of this speech. As was communicated by the president of the Detroit chapter of the NAACP, its purpose was to reaffirm the centrality of the black church in the African American experience. If its role is central, and Wright is its spokesman, then his false theory of difference might be likewise central to how African Americans understand themselves. Racial divides in America are not just cultural, they are biological.

What is at stake here is nothing less than the relationship between scientific knowledge and moral judgment. What nefarious conclusions could one reach about our moral obligations to others if we believe, with scientific certitude, that they are fundamentally and irreversibly different than ourselves? The possibilities are frightening and were played out in tragic detail during the first half of the 20th century.

I would argue to my demise that the scientific process should be held completely separate from moral reasoning. They are so utterly different from one another in their scope and application that they cannot, and should not, communicate with one another. Hence, no scientific explanation of human nature should ever be used to support a moral conclusion about the world. Is this what Wright was doing in his speech? Yes.

He believes firmly that the way forward for the African American community is to acknowledge difference and accept it warmly. This is a wise and useful moral claim. However, to say that we must do so because the scientific evidence leaves us no other choice is to horribly misunderstand what these two claims are about. Any community's moral conception of the world must be held sacrosanct from the world they find themselves in, lest it be mistaken for just another problem to be solved. Although science can help us understand the world we are in, it must never be taken to describe the world we should strive for. And in mistaking this, the theology of Wright should be resisted.

Justin is a graduate student in religious studies at the University of California, Riverside. Thank you, Champaign.

EDITORIAL CARTOON DANE GAYDOS, THE DAILY ILLINI



DRAWING COFFEE

Ten gripes about my first year in CU

As finals week draws nigh, I console myself frequently with the mantra, "It's almost over!" For me, this is a much greater victory than the completion of fall semester, because I will finally be done with my first year in Champaign-Urbana.

Now that it's time to wrap things up, I'd like to find some closure and offer my newfound wisdom to others. I thought about creating a top ten list of my experiences as a transfer student. But after considering how writing about happiness can destroy one's "edgy" artistic image (oh, Sheryl Crow... whatever happened to "My Favorite Mistake"? No one wanted to soak up the sun), I thought it more prudent to instead detail my bottom 10. I encountered many annoyances during my first year in the CU, and after making a lengthy list (with an equally long list of things I enjoyed—but shh, don't tell anyone), I narrowed it down to these ten as the lowest of the low: a combination of the most aggravating circumstances I encountered.



CHELSEA FIDDEYMAT

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Number 10: The long, cold winter—and the lack of snow days. I can't say much about the cold, since I just came from Springfield. But something about this past winter (not quite past, after this week) was especially cold, not to mention the days when we had some significant snow accumulation. UIS cancels class at even the rumor of snow. Alas, the U of I main campus employs a small army of highly trained snow removal mercenaries that took all the spring from my snow-booted step. There's nothing like trudging to 9 a.m. class in drifts almost up to your knees.

Number 9: The intersection at 5th & Green. Unlike the other intersections on Green Street, this one boasts no traffic light or crosswalk signals. Even the most cautious of pedes-

trians may be left stranded in the middle of the painted walk, cars whizzing past so closely that buttons may be torn from your shirt.

Number 8: October leasing. I had a difficult enough time finding a suitable place to live for this year. Little did I know that should I desire to move into an off-campus space for next year, I would need summon a roommate from thin air in October—not to mention that I would have been pressured to sign a lease immediately after touring a place, or risk losing it to someone else before I had time to deliberate or closely peruse the lease itself. This is unfair not only to transfer students, but to first-year students who are also new to the area. Here's to it getting pushed forward to February.

Number 7: Espresso Royale Coffee, or "Aaah! My stomach lining!"

Number 6: Parking. Not only did I pay over five times the cost of my previous parking deal, but I had to park in E-14, over a mile from where I live. Aside from occupying the parking garages on the weekend, I have developed an inane fear of discovering that my car has been towed.

Number 5: Reckless pedestrians: the bane of any student with a car. When driving anywhere around campustown, people (and bicyclists!) will just step out into the street in front your car and refuse to look at you, as if glancing up to see A CAR COMING

QUOTES OF THE DAY

"This is somebody that looks like Jimi or is pretending to look like him, but it certainly didn't look like a dead-on match to me."

-CHARLES R. CROSS, a biographer of legendary guitarist JIMI HENDRIX after looking at a sex-tape allegedly featuring the musician that is being released by an adult entertainment company in California.

"You'll quickly come to realize that the nuanced story telling and presentation is on par with the finest films by directors like Martin Scorsese or Francis Ford Coppola."

-A Los Angeles video game enthusiast speaking to Reuters about "GRAND THEFT AUTO IV," the next installment of the incredibly popular and much-criticized Rockstar franchise.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Men's Center letter unhelpful

I'm a little unsure as to why the DI would publish the brazen hyperbole that was Monday's "Men's Center" letter.

This kind of inflammatory sentiment in no way represents a reasonable position in the conversation surrounding whether or not to establish a Women's Center. UIUC students, faculty and staff are ready for an honest discourse on this issue, and everyone deserves to have their voice heard. Instead of wasting energy on the genera-

tion of unneeded excitement, what's stopping us from looking honestly at the issues being discussed and expressing ourselves respectfully? I, for one, do not believe that the prospect of a Women's Center represents a zero-sum game as it is in everyone's interest to provide adequate support to UIUC students. Domestic abuse, sexual assault and gender denigration are facts of life on our campus. These things benefit nobody; therefore, it is in the interest of everybody to put a stop to them.

CALEB CURTIS
Junior LAS

Carter the man to work for peace

Former President Carter has taken a lot of beating in the international media these last few weeks for his meeting with Hamas.

He was labeled a "bigot" by the Israeli U.N. representative Dan Gillerman. The Bush administration has denigrated his trip to Syria, calling it unhelpful.

However, in reality, he is one of a very few people with the political acumen to understand the reality of the situation.

The United States' policy in this matter has been underwhelming, with Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas returning from talks with President Bush this week with little accomplished.

The truth is that Hamas is a key player in these negotiations, despite their continued reliance on reprehensible tactics to pursue some of their goals.

They are well organized and financed and have shown themselves capable of handling the pressure of military attacks (as demonstrated by Israel's failed initiative in 2006). In a

2006 election that was internationally monitored and vetted, Hamas gained substantial political power in the Palestine region.

The response from most western governments was that ignoring Hamas will better situate them to find a cure for the region's ills.

Marginalizing Hamas will not achieve the goals of a peace process. All entities need to be involved in a peace brokerage, even the spoilers.

Jimmy Carter has realized that the only way one can get back along any sort of road to peace is to talk. Not to label and

exclude, but to extend a hand and work together.

As one of only two U.S. Presidents to receive a Nobel Peace prize, Jimmy Carter was recognized "for his decades of untiring effort to find peaceful solutions to international conflicts ..."

He helped broker a long-lasting peace accord between Israel and Egypt.

Who better than to reach out to the shattered relations between Israel and Palestine?

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